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**Testimony of Victoria Veltri, Acting State Healthcare Advocate  
Before the Insurance and Real Estate Committee  
In Support of S.B. 976 and S.B. 978  
February 24, 2011**

Good afternoon Senator Crisco, Representative Megna, Senator Kelly, Representative Coutu and members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee. For the record, I am Victoria Veltri, the Acting State Healthcare Advocate. My office, the Office of the Healthcare Advocate (OHA) is an independent state agency with a three-fold mission: assuring managed care consumers have access to medically necessary healthcare; educating consumers about their rights and responsibilities under health insurance plans; and, informing you of problems consumers face in accessing care and proposing solutions to those problems.

I am happy to testify today in support of two bills, S.B. 976 and S.B. 978. Each of these pieces of legislation provides valuable, necessary protections for health insurance consumers, and I ask for your consideration for each of these important bills.

S.B. 976, An Act Establishing the Nutmeg Health Insurance Plan for Uninsured Individuals, would allow uninsured individuals to purchase health insurance through the Municipal Employee Health Insurance Plan. By allowing these individuals access to quality, affordable health insurance coverage, this bill could significantly reduce the number of uninsured Connecticut residents. For this reason, OHA supports this legislation.

OHA also supports S.B. 978, An Act Expanding Group Health Insurance Coverage for the Treatment of Autism Spectrum Disorders to Certificate Holders in this State. This legislation would provide a technical correction to existing legislation to ensure that health insurance certificate holders have the same access to treatment for Autism Spectrum Disorders as health insurance policyholders. OHA supports S.B. 978 as an appropriate solution to the oversight that excluded certificate holders from the original bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of S.B. 976 and S.B. 978. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.